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Committee
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Approved For Release 2004/05/05 : CIA-RDP80M01082A000200020008-4
THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Office of the Director

IC 74-2076
7 October 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Members of the Ad Hoc Committee
on Watch Mechanism

1. The Acting Chairman of the Watch Committee, with the concurrence of the Intelligence Community Staff, has forwarded for your review a revised draft proposal for the revitalization of the Watch Committee/NIC mechanism. This revised proposal will be considered at the next meeting of this committee, to be held at 10 A.M. on 17 October 1974 in Room 6E0708 of the CIA Headquarters Building. It is requested that you be prepared at this meeting, on behalf of your principals, to concur in the proposal, suggest explicit amendments, or present a specific alternative proposal for USIB consideration.

2. The IC Staff supports the proposal of the Acting Chairman of the Watch Committee in its present form. There is, however, some sentiment on the ad hoc committee which favors widening rather than narrowing the focus of the Watch mechanism. One notion, for example, is that the mechanism should warn of all developing crisis situations affecting US interests, not simply those related to Soviet or Chinese military action. But, in our view, such broad warning is already a function of existing elements of the community and is, in addition, one of the DCI's prime substantive responsibilities, one which is performed through established procedures and mechanisms (including the NIO system). Further, developing a discrete Watch mechanism responsible for the broad, world-wide warning problem would, in our view, place an unreasonable burden on the committee's small staff or, alternatively, require a substantial expansion of that staff.

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3. Another argument against a narrowly focused Watch mechanism--not entirely consistent with the first--is that the Watch mechanism's real value lies in its ability to challenge the conventional wisdom of the rest of the community, particularly as expressed in current intelligence production. Accordingly, the proponents of this line say, the geographic and functional expertise of the Watch mechanism should be broadened to cover all subjects on which it might wish to issue such challenges. In our view, however, the challenge function--or the devil's advocate role--is distinct from the warning function and is not in any event the sole or primary responsibility of a Watch mechanism.

4. Any member of the Ad Hoc Committee who wishes to express his general views in writing before the meeting of 17 October is of course welcome to do so. But, as suggested above, we urge those who do not endorse the existing proposal to come to the meeting on 17 October prepared to table dissents or alternative proposals, as approved by your principals. We would include these in our final report, which we plan to forward to USIB by 24 October.



Chief, Product Review Division
Intelligence Community Staff

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